

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 – 23. (Cancelled).

24. (Previously presented) A method of reinforcing a cylindrical underground pipeline, comprising the steps of:

laying an excavation coffer on the ground above the pipeline, front and rear faces of the coffer being placed transversely to the pipeline, each of said front and rear faces having along a lower edge thereof an indentation of a shape adapted to a cylindrical shape of the pipeline;

driving the coffer into the ground substantially until said indentations are brought up against the pipeline, and removing soil material between the front and rear faces of the coffer to provide access to an upper part of a wall of the pipeline;

further removing soil material under the pipeline from the inside of the coffer;

installing at least one reinforcement around the pipeline in an interval between the front and rear faces of the coffer; and

wherein the step of driving the excavation coffer into the ground comprises a first phase, wherein linear guides are driven vertically into the ground on either side of the pipeline, and a second phase, wherein the front and rear faces of the coffer are slid along said linear guides.

25. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 24, further comprising the preliminary step of removing part of the soil material above the pipeline where the excavation coffer is to be laid.

26. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 24, wherein the linear guides comprise sheet piles assembled into two curtains perpendicular to the pipeline on either side thereof.

27. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 24, further comprising the step of engaging at least one arcuate duct under the pipeline by pushing said duct along a lower part of the wall of the pipeline, said at least one reinforcement being threaded into said duct.

28. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein the arcuate duct comprises two sections each covering substantially one quarter of a revolution, the two sections being pushed toward one another from two sides of the pipeline in order to meet underneath the pipeline.

29. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein the arcuate duct covers substantially half of one revolution and is pushed from one side of the pipeline until it appears on the opposite side.

30. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 29, wherein the arcuate duct consists of a one-piece profile section, and wherein the coffer is driven into the ground and the soil material is removed so as to give access to more than half of a circumference on the upper part of the wall of the pipeline.

31. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein the arcuate duct comprises at least one profile section bent in the form of an arc of a circle, having a side

open to the inside of the curvature of the duct in order to come up against the wall of the pipeline.

32. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 31, wherein the arcuate duct is pushed with the aid of at least one actuator placed between a first bearing point fixed with respect to the coffer and a second bearing point mounted on the profile section.

33. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 32, wherein the position of the second bearing point along the profile section is varied as the arcuate duct is being pushed.

34. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein a tool for decohesion of the soil material is placed in front of the arcuate duct during the engagement of the duct under the pipeline.

35. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein the step of further removing soil material under the pipeline from the inside of the coffer comprises sucking soil material into the duct during the engagement of the duct under the pipeline.

36. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, wherein compressed air is expelled through orifices formed on lateral faces of the duct during the push of the duct under the pipeline.

37. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 27, further comprising the step of threading into the arcuate duct an insert having at least one cell for receiving a reinforcement or a group of reinforcements.

38. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 24, wherein the step of further removing soil material under the pipeline from the inside of the coffer comprises:

performing vertical excavations on both sides of the pipeline from within the excavation coffer, down to a level deeper than a bottom level of the pipeline;

digging a horizontal tunnel under the pipeline between the vertical excavations.

39. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 24, wherein the horizontal tunnel is dug by means of a conveyor belt carrying excavation cups.

40. (Previously Presented) A method of reinforcing a cylindrical underground pipeline, comprising the steps of:

laying an excavation coffer on the ground above the pipeline, front and rear faces of the coffer being placed transversely to the pipeline, each of said front and rear faces having along a lower edge thereof an indentation of a shape adapted to a cylindrical shape of the pipeline;

driving the coffer into the ground substantially until said indentations are brought up against the pipeline, and removing soil material between the front and rear faces of the coffer to provide access to an upper part of a wall of the pipeline;

engaging at least one arcuate duct under the pipeline by pushing said duct along a lower part of the wall of the pipeline;

further removing soil material from the arcuate duct under the pipeline from the inside of the coffer; and

threading at least one reinforcement into said duct around the pipeline in an interval between the front and rear faces of the coffer.

41. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, further comprising the preliminary step of removing part of the soil material above the pipeline where the excavation coffer is to be laid.

42. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein the arcuate duct comprises two sections each covering substantially one quarter of a revolution, the two sections being pushed toward one another from two sides of the pipeline in order to meet underneath the pipeline.

43. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein the arcuate duct covers substantially half of one revolution and is pushed from one side of the pipeline until it appears on the opposite side.

44. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 43, wherein the arcuate duct consists of a one-piece profile section, and wherein the coffer is driven into the ground and the soil material is removed so as to give access to more than half of a circumference on the upper part of the wall of the pipeline.

45. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein the arcuate duct comprises at least one profile section bent in the form of an arc of a circle, having a side open to the inside of the curvature of the duct in order to come up against the wall of the pipeline.

46. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 45, wherein the arcuate duct is pushed with the aid of at least one actuator placed between a first bearing point fixed with respect to the coffer and a second bearing point mounted on the profile section.

47. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 46, wherein the position of the second bearing point along the profile section is varied as the arcuate duct is being pushed.

48. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein a tool for decohesion of the soil material is placed in front of the arcuate duct during the engagement of the duct under the pipeline.

49. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein the step of further removing soil material under the pipeline from the inside of the coffer comprises sucking soil material into the duct during the engagement of the duct under the pipeline.

50. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, wherein compressed air is expelled through orifices formed on lateral faces of the duct during the push of the duct under the pipeline.

51. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 40, further comprising the step of threading into the arcuate duct an insert having at least one cell for receiving a reinforcement or a group of reinforcements.